

## **Knowledge, Attitude, Acceptance and Utilization of Natural Family Planning Methods among Non-academic Workers of a Private University in Ogun State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** To address the challenge of rapid population increase, family planning as a mechanism is promoted. Challenges associated with the introduction of modern methods of family planning led to the need for an alternative but the utilization of natural family planning methods as an alternative is low and has not been emphasized in the literature. **Aim:** The objective of this study was to assess the knowledge, attitude, acceptance, and utilization of natural family planning methods among non-academic workers in a Private University in Ogun State, Nigeria. **Subjects and Methods:** Using a descriptive study, 89 non-academic workers were randomly selected to participate in the study. Participants were given structured questionnaires to complete. Data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science and were presented in tables reporting frequency counts and percentages. **Result:** Majority, 63% of participants had a moderate level of knowledge of Natural family planning methods, 62.5% had a positive attitude towards its use; 78.7% signified acceptance and 60.7% had a high utilization rate. Findings also revealed a statistically significant relationship between knowledge and acceptance and the utilization of NFP. **Conclusion:** Institutional-based and community-related educational programs for non-academic workers should be designed to improve their knowledge and utilization of NFP methods.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Knowledge, Natural family planning methods, Non-academic workers, Utilization.

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### **I. Introduction**

A crucial resource for the development of any country is its population, as such, it is important to determine the size of a population and its future growth in order to improve the economic development of such country.<sup>[1]</sup> To address the challenge of rapid population increase and meet the reproductive health needs of both men and women, family planning (FP) as a mechanism must be promoted globally.<sup>[2]</sup> The aim of family planning (FP) is to empower individuals, especially couples to plan and have the number of children they desire including making decisions on appropriate timing and spacing of their births.<sup>[2]</sup> Although millions of individuals have the power and means to plan the timing and number of their children, they often take it for granted. On the other hand, a large number of the world population do not have access to family planning information and its services or have access to poor services, and thus, do not have the means and power to make decisions about the timing, spacing and number of children.<sup>[3]</sup>

Records reveal that poor health status and poverty is largely linked to or associated with short intervals between births and large family size.<sup>[4]</sup> Despite all the challenges associated with multiple births, it was reported that 15% of the married women in Nigeria use all methods of contraceptive.<sup>[5]</sup> Research studies show that only 20% of the world population are using modern family planning methods although about 96.5% have knowledge on family planning, indicating that the remaining population practice NFP methods or none at all.<sup>[1]</sup> Challenges associated with the introduction of modern methods of family planning led to the need for an alternative but the utilization of natural family planning methods as an alternative is low and has not been emphasized in the literature. Natural family planning methods are methods that are used to either plan or prevent pregnancy by observing the natural signs and symptoms that occur during the fertile and infertile days of the menstrual cycle.<sup>[6]</sup>

The amount and quality of knowledge influences attitude and acceptance of NFP methods. Studies indicate a need for the knowledge about the various methods of natural family planning as it is of paramount importance due to its influence on the attitude, acceptance, and utilization of NFP methods.<sup>[7,8]</sup> As studies reveal the level of knowledge is low, so negative attitudes towards NFP methods are to be expected.<sup>[9]</sup> This hereby indicates that a positive attitude and high motivation in relation to the use of NFP methods facilitates acceptance. A study by Kabonga et al.<sup>[10]</sup> reveals that worldwide, low utilization of NFP is a problem. This

indicates a need for a worldwide increase in health programs on NFP methods as the amount and quality of knowledge influences attitude and acceptance of NFP methods, which in turn influences its utilization.<sup>[9]</sup> Studies reveal that knowledge of NFP methods and attitude towards NFP methods affects its utilization.<sup>[7,11]</sup>

Research has shown that in Nigeria, there is a reduction in the awareness of NFP methods, its correct description, and its utilization.<sup>[7]</sup> This study by researchers from the departments of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria revealed that there is a low level of knowledge, wrong use and poor utilization of natural family planning methods in the population under study.<sup>[7]</sup> Therefore, in order to improve the utilization of NFP methods, it is paramount to improve the level of knowledge of NFP methods.<sup>[7]</sup> This study is also similar to a study by Kabonga et al.<sup>[10]</sup> which reveals that the problem of low utilization of NFP is worldwide and can also be related to low level of knowledge and negative attitudes towards its use.<sup>[10]</sup> Godswill<sup>[12]</sup> also observed that the high value placed on motherhood and children in Nigeria also limit the control women have over their reproductive and maternal health, consequently leading to high fertility rate in the country and endangering the health of mother and children.<sup>[12]</sup> This can also account for the low utilization of family planning services verified by empiric studies.<sup>[13,14]</sup>

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the level of knowledge of natural family planning methods among non-academic workers in Babcock University.
2. To determine the attitudes of non-academic workers in Babcock University towards natural family planning methods.
3. To assess the level of acceptance of natural family planning methods among non-academic workers in Babcock University.
4. To determine the level of utilization of NFP practices among non-academic workers in Babcock University.
5. To determine the relationship between knowledge, attitude and acceptance of NFP methods and its utilization.

## **II. Subjects And Methods**

This was a descriptive study conducted among non-academic workers of Babcock University located in the southwestern region of Nigeria. At the time of this study, there were 114 full time married female non-academic workers in the 5 administrative divisions of Babcock University. To determine the sample size, Yamane's formula was used to derive a sample size of 89 at 95% confidence level and 5% level of precision. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 89 random participants. After obtaining an ethical clearance from the Babcock University Health Research Ethical Committee (BUHREC), participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence and that the data would be used solely for the purpose of academic research.

Tool for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was validated by experts and pretested yielding a validity value of 0.929 using Cronbach's Alpha. Participants completed the structured questionnaire which composed of questions regarding sociodemographic data, knowledge, attitude, acceptance and utilization of natural family planning methods. For the knowledge outcome; correct responses were scored as 2, while incorrect responses were scored as 1. The maximum obtainable knowledge score was 28; scores between 14- <19 were classified as low knowledge, 19-<25 as moderate knowledge and score >25 as high knowledge. For attitudinal outcome, the percentage of respondents with correct responses for each statement was calculated and then average percentage of respondents with correct responses was done, if <50%, then the attitude was negative, if >50%, attitude was positive. For acceptance outcome, the percentage of respondents with correct responses (that chose 'Yes') for each statement was calculated and then the average percentage of respondents with correct responses was done, if <50%, then NFP methods were not accepted, if >50%, they were accepted. For utilization outcome, the average percentage of respondents that reported past and present use of NFP methods was calculated, if <50, utilization was low, if >50, utilization was high. Pearson Product Moment of Correlation was used to determine the association between knowledge, attitude and acceptance of NFP methods and the use of NFP methods at 0.05 level of significance. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used for data analysis.

## **III. Results**

There was 100% (89/89) response rate in this study.

Table 1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents. Majority, 36% of the respondents were within the ages of 39-47 years, 53.9% were Yoruba, 68.5% were Christians, with 30.3% being SDA, 52.8% had above tertiary level of education and 59.6% had 1-3 children.

Table 2 shows the level of knowledge of respondents using the cumulative scores of each respondent. 20% had a high level of knowledge of NFP methods; 63% had a moderate level of knowledge while 17% had a low level of knowledge.

Table 3 reveals the attitudes of respondents towards NFP. Based on the percentage of respondents with correct responses; 44.9% of the respondents are of the opinion that birth control methods are effective, 65.2% believe that NFP is not too difficult to use, 77.5% are of the opinion that they can abstain from sex during the fertile period with their husbands, 88.8% report that their cultures do not disapprove of it, 89.9% state that their husbands do not support the method and 74.2% are of the opinion that periodic abstinence will not interfere with their sex life. The average percentage of respondents with correct responses was 73.4%.

Table 4 shows the acceptance of natural family planning methods by respondents. Majority 78.7% believed natural family planning methods are safe and effective while 11.2% of the respondents believe they are not safe and effective. It also revealed that 60.7% of the respondents are of the opinion that they will choose natural family planning. The average percentage of respondents with correct responses was 69.7%.

Table 5 reveals the responses of respondents' on utilization of natural family planning methods. Majority 60.7% of the respondents reported current use of NFP methods; 69.7% reported past use of NFP methods and 65.1% reported past use was effective. The average percentage of respondents that reported past and present use of NFP methods was 69.7%.

Table 6 shows the analysis of the association between knowledge, attitude and acceptance of NFP methods and the use of NFP methods using Pearson Product Moment of Correlation. It was revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between knowledge and acceptance and utilization of NFP ( $p < 0.01$ ), while no significant relationship exist between attitude and utilization of NFP ( $p > 0.01$ ) among non-academic workers in Babcock University.

**Table 1: Sociodemographic Distribution of Respondents (n= 89)**

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	21-29	12	13.5
	30-38	31	34.8
	39-47	32	36.0
	48-56	13	14.6
	Above 56	1	1.1
Ethnicity:	Igbo	22	24.7
	Yoruba	48	53.9
	Hausa/Fulani	19	21.3
Religion	Christianity	61	68.5
	Islam	23	25.8
	Traditional	3	3.4
	Others	2	2.2
Denomination	None	1	1.1
	Roman Catholic	12	13.5
	Pentecostal	17	19.1
	SDA	27	30.3
	Jehovah Witness	2	2.2
	Others	3	3.4
No of children	None	8	9.0
	1-3	53	59.6
	4-6	28	31.5
Level of Education	Tertiary	42	47.2
	Others	47	52.8
Division working in Babcock University	Presidency	15	16.9
	Financial Administration	6	6.7
	Development and Strategy	7	7.9
	Student Development	34	38.2
	Academic division & sub-division	27	30.3

**Table 2: Table Showing the Level of Knowledge of Respondents Using Cumulative Scores of Each Respondent.**

Category	Criteria	Frequency n= 89	Percentage (%)	Remarks
25-28	High	18	20%	18(20%) of the respondents had cumulative scores between 25-28 which indicates that 18 of the respondents had a high level of knowledge of natural family planning methods.
19- 24	Moderate	56	63%	56(63%) of the respondents had cumulative scores between 19-24. which indicates that 56 of the respondents had a moderate level of knowledge of natural family planning methods.
14- 18	Low	15	17%	15(17%) of the respondents had cumulative scores between 14-18. which indicates that 15 of the respondents had a low level of knowledge of natural family planning methods.

**Table 3: Attitudes of Respondents' towards Natural Family Planning Methods**

STATEMENTS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Frequency of respondents with correct responses (n=89)	Percentage of respondents with correct responses (%)	Remarks
No birth control method is effective.	10(11.2)	39(43.8)	25(28.1)	15(16.9)	2.49	40	44.9	Negative
NFP is too difficult to use.	5(5.6)	26(29.2)	49(55.1)	9(10.1)	2.30	58	65.2	Positive
My husband and I cannot abstain from sex during the fertile period.	8(9)	12(13.5)	59(66.3)	10(11.2)	2.52	69	77.5	Positive
My culture disapproves Natural family planning methods.	4(4.5)	6(6.7)	63(70.8)	16(18)	1.98	79	88.8	Positive
My husband does not support NFP methods.	4(4.5)	5(5.6)	65(73)	15(16.9)	1.98	80	89.9	Positive
Periodic abstinence will interfere with my sex-life.	11(12.4)	12(13.5)	55(61.8)	11(12.4)	2.26	66	74.2	Positive

**Table 4: Acceptance of Natural Family Planning Methods**

VARIABLES	Frequency (%) (n=89)		
	YES	NO	UNSURE
Natural family planning is safe and effective	70 (78.7)	10 (11.2)	9 (10.1)
I will choose Natural family planning over artificial methods of family planning	54 (60.7)	8 (9.0)	27 (30.3)

**Table 5: Responses of Participants' on the Utilization of Natural Family Planning Methods (n=89)**

VARIABLE	YES Frequency (%)	NO Frequency (%)
Are you currently using any Natural family planning method?	54 (60.7)	35 (39.3)
Have you used any Natural family planning method in the past?	62 (69.7)	27 (30.3)
If yes, was it effective?	58 (65.1)	3 (3.4)

**Table 6: Relationship between Knowledge, Attitude and Acceptance of NFP and the Use of Natural Family Planning Methods Correlations**

	Utilization	Knowledge	Acceptance	Attitude
Utilization	Pearson Correlation	1	.257	-.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013	.904
	N	51	39	51
Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.393*	1	.460**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013		.003
	N	39	60	60
Acceptance	Pearson Correlation	.357	.377**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.068	.003	
	N	51	60	89
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	-.017	.460**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.904	.000	
	N	51	60	89

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### IV. Discussion

Socio-demographic data of respondents revealed that majority of the respondents are within the ages of 39-47 years. This shows that most respondents are within the reproductive age and as the study population consisted of married women, these ages were as expected.

Our result shows that majority, 63% of non-academic workers had a moderate level of knowledge of NFP methods. This finding is contradicted by Audu et al.<sup>[7]</sup> who stated that there was a low level of awareness and low utilization of natural family planning methods among the African population. This corroborates the results from other studies that revealed a low level of awareness about NFP methods as well as minimal or incorrect knowledge of NFP among the general population.<sup>[11,15,16]</sup> In line with findings of this study was a research conducted by Ikechebelu et al.<sup>[8]</sup> in Maiduguri, Nigeria which shows a high level of knowledge among (80%) among study participants. Also contradicting this study is Orji et al.<sup>[17]</sup> who reported a high level (95.8%) of awareness of family planning methods among the respondents but a lower knowledge of natural family planning methods by the few who practice family planning.

A positive attitude towards NFP methods was seen as majority (73.4%) of the non-academic workers, agreed that NFP is not difficult to use; they could abstain from sex during their fertile period with their husbands; that their culture does not disapprove it, their husbands support the method and periodic abstinence will not in any way affect their sex life. This finding is supported by Leonard et al.,<sup>[18]</sup> who reported that NFP methods are easy to use and periodic abstinence does not in any way affect sex life but increases relationship satisfaction. Findings are also in line with study by Witt et al.,<sup>[11]</sup> which reveals that culture and spousal support affects women's attitude towards NFP methods.

The study results show that most, 69.7% of the respondents approve the practice of natural family planning because they find it safer and effective and will choose NFP methods over artificial methods. This finding is supported by Ikechebulu et al.,<sup>[8]</sup> who reported that traditionally, Nigerian women prefer the use of NFP methods and findings from the National demographic health survey<sup>[19]</sup> that showed that Nigerian couples are non-contraceptive users. Also supporting this view, Leonard et al.,<sup>[18]</sup> stated that most women of reproductive age are interested in the use of NFP. This corroborates with various studies that showed that FP use varies according to religion or cultural values, myths, knowledge, promotion and marketing, effectiveness of the method, marital status, sex, age, policies, social and economic factors, as well as the attitudes of clients and providers.<sup>[11,20,21,22]</sup>

Study findings revealed that non-academic workers, 65.2% have a relatively high level of utilization of NFP methods. The level of utilization of NFP was examined in relation to the past use and present use. Findings revealed that most of the respondents currently use NFP methods and most of the respondents have used NFP methods in the past, frequently used NFP methods during their fertile period which signifies that the utilization of NFP methods among the study population is high. This is contradicted by a study by Uchimura et al.<sup>[23]</sup> which showed a low actual use/utilization because of the lack of information by health professionals about the real effectiveness and applicability.

Result revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between knowledge, acceptance, and utilization of NFP, while no significant relationship exists between attitude and utilization of NFP among non-academic workers in Babcock University. This implies that the level of knowledge of NFP methods among non-academic workers and their acceptance of these methods will affect their utilization of NFP methods. This study revealed that a substantial proportion of respondents have a moderate level of knowledge of NFP methods and also approve of NFP methods which led to the relatively high level of utilization of NFP methods among the respondents. This is in line with various research studies which reveal that knowledge of NFP methods and acceptability of these methods directly affects its utilization.<sup>[9,24]</sup> The lower the level of knowledge and acceptance, the lower the utilization of NFP methods or the poorer its utilization.<sup>[9]</sup> Moreover, the finding revealed that the level of knowledge of NFP methods is a predictor of NFP utilization. This finding is in line with the study of Uchimura et al.<sup>[17]</sup> who reported that there is a correlation between level of knowledge and the utilization of NFP methods. The researcher concludes that since respondents have a moderate knowledge of NFP methods, their utilization of NFP methods will be affected. This is supported with various research studies that knowledge of NFP methods directly affects its utilization.<sup>[7,9,24]</sup> Acceptance of NFP methods strongly affects its utilization.<sup>[25]</sup> Research has revealed that the benefits associated with the use of NFP methods have facilitated its acceptance to a great extent, which has also simultaneously enhanced its utilization.<sup>[25]</sup>

#### LIMITATIONS

Study participants were selected from only one institution and the study was limited to only the non-academic workers which limit the generalizability of the study result.

## V. Conclusion

The analysis of this study provides information on the knowledge, attitude, acceptance, and utilization of natural family planning methods among non-academic workers in Babcock University. Results demonstrate a moderate level of knowledge of NFP methods among non-academic workers in Babcock University, yet differences in knowledge of specific NFP methods exist, revealing that the problem of low to moderate level of knowledge of NFP methods is still a global problem, particularly in Nigeria. Substantial proportion of non-academic workers had positive attitudes towards NFP methods and approved of it, hence more room for increasing NFP method usage in the study population. Physicians and other health care providers' limited knowledge of and experience with NFP methods inhibits broader use as non-academic workers reported getting information about NFP methods from health providers and friends, therefore, their level of knowledge will depend largely on the information received. As such, factors for solving this problem are hospital and community-related and it requires social measures and conduction of educational programs to give a lasting solution, that is, improve the level of knowledge, which will in turn improves the attitude, acceptance, and utilization of NFP methods.

## VI. Recommendations

As the study indicated information from health care providers and friends as the major sources where non-academic workers learn about natural family planning methods, the Nigeria government should improve on the existing strategies in propagating the practice of natural family planning. This can be done by the encouragement of male involvement alongside their wives; hospital/health centre should be organized, such that both men and women can receive services on reproductive health issues for effective practices of natural family planning to be achieved. There should be training and re-training programmes for health care providers about NFP methods and in other areas necessary and educational forums should be set up for workers within various institutions where they will receive useful and correct teachings about NFP methods, types of these methods, including correct use and effectiveness rates. Various posters and handbills, including leaflets can be made available in family planning clinics and even distributed in institutions to workers to create understanding and awareness among the general population. Campaigns should be conducted in communities to create awareness and increase the level of knowledge of NFP methods among both the illiterate and literates to reduce large family size and overpopulation that tasks the economic growth of any country. Furthermore, in as much as people cannot be made to disregard the importance of culture and religion in reproductive health issues, community and religious leaders should be encouraged and involved by government to teach messages that will encourage, enlighten and change the resistant behaviors people have on reproductive health issues.

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